

















## Novelties of the New World

By David Snow

JOSEPH KASTNER:  
A World of Naturalists  
364pp. John Murray. £7.95.

The naturalists who explored North America in the 120 years from about 1730 to 1850—for they were the subject of Joseph Kastner's delightful book—were surely as remarkable a collection as can be found in any century of the exploration of any of the continents. Coming from the most diverse backgrounds, they all had the three essential qualities: physical energy, unflagging curiosity and the ability to write. Several of them were also supremely good artists in their own fields. They travelled, often on foot, through a world that we can now hardly imagine, though it ceased to exist only a century ago; a world of seemingly endless forests and swamps, pinlands and mountains, sparsely populated with Red Indian tribes living in an uneasy state of partial truce with a handful of settlers and traders.

When the story starts, Linnaeus was emerging as the central figure in world natural history. Having published and gained wide acceptance for his binomial system of nomenclature, which for the first time made possible an orderly and agreed classification of all known forms of animal and plant life, he settled down at Uppsala as it were in the centre of a web whose tentacles reached to all accessible parts of the world. From correspondents in remote places, and from pupils whom he sent out, the new plant and animal specimens came pouring in. At the same time there was an increasing demand from botanically minded gentlemen and from botanic gardens for the seeds of the more spectacular and useful of the exotic novelties. Middlemen such as Peter Collinson of London, a Quaker merchant who was responsible for introducing more American plants into Europe than any other single person, devoted a great part of their lives and a good deal of their resources to corresponding at length, and over decades, with the collectors in newly opened up lands, so that an intimacy grew up over the years between men who had never met.

When the story ends, American scientists had thrown off their subordination to European sages and patrons, had founded their own scientific societies and institutions, and were standing on their own feet. At the same time the

scientific leadership had shifted from the field work of a self-made naturalist, to the trained "closet naturalist" who could take a broader view and was of equal stature to his counterparts in the major European institutions.

From then on it was no longer an Alexander Wilson or an Audubon who would make the great advances, but a Spencer Baird or an Asa Gray, starting with Cadwalader Colden, an eighteenth-century virtuoso of many parts, Governor of New York, amateur botanist, and correspondent of Linnaeus, we end with Asa Gray corresponding with Charles Darwin and providing him with evidence that was to be used in the *Origin of Species*.

Between these there is a rich succession of characters, the most important of whom are given chapters to themselves. All are allowed to speak for themselves through direct quotation from their books, journals and letters. Many came from Scotland; in fact Edinburgh University must have trained more eminent early naturalists than all other British universities put together. The most outstanding of the Scottish was surely, however, Alexander Wilson, the self-taught weaver from Paisley, who emigrated to America embittered at what seems to have been an unjust jail sentence and in 1791 landed in Delaware Bay and "a new world to us, filled with strange birds. I did not observe one such as those in Scotland, but all much richer in color". Before he left home Wilson had begun to rival his contemporary Robert Burns as a popular poet, but in the New World he gave his life to the study of birds, finally producing in his *American Ornithology*, with its beautifully drawn if stiff bird portraits and accurate text, the first great treatise on any branch of American natural history.

To collect subscriptions for his work he walked, rode, rowed and canoed thousands of miles over the eastern half of the country, from New England south to Georgia. Wilson's work was eventually overshadowed by the more flamboyant Audubon, but he was the better naturalist. Audubon's undoubted brilliance was at times flawed by lack of integrity; whether one prefers Wilson's careful bird portraits to Audubon's striking but often overstrained compositions is a matter of taste rather than scientific judgment.

At the upper end of the social scale, two of the country's major statesmen, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, were also notable naturalists and played important roles in the development of

American natural history. Jefferson, among other activities of a more positive kind, found himself involved in refuting the absurd ideas of the Comte de Buffon, a formidable polymath but poor naturalist whose writings carried weight of all proportion to their real value. Buffon persisted in asserting that the animals and plants of the New World were simply degenerate versions of the much finer and larger species that occurred in the Old World. Jefferson went to the length of shipping a very large specimen of moose to Paris for Buffon to see, sending the bill to the embassy in London, where a puzzled John Adams paid it. Buffon promised to set things right, but never did so as he died very soon afterwards.

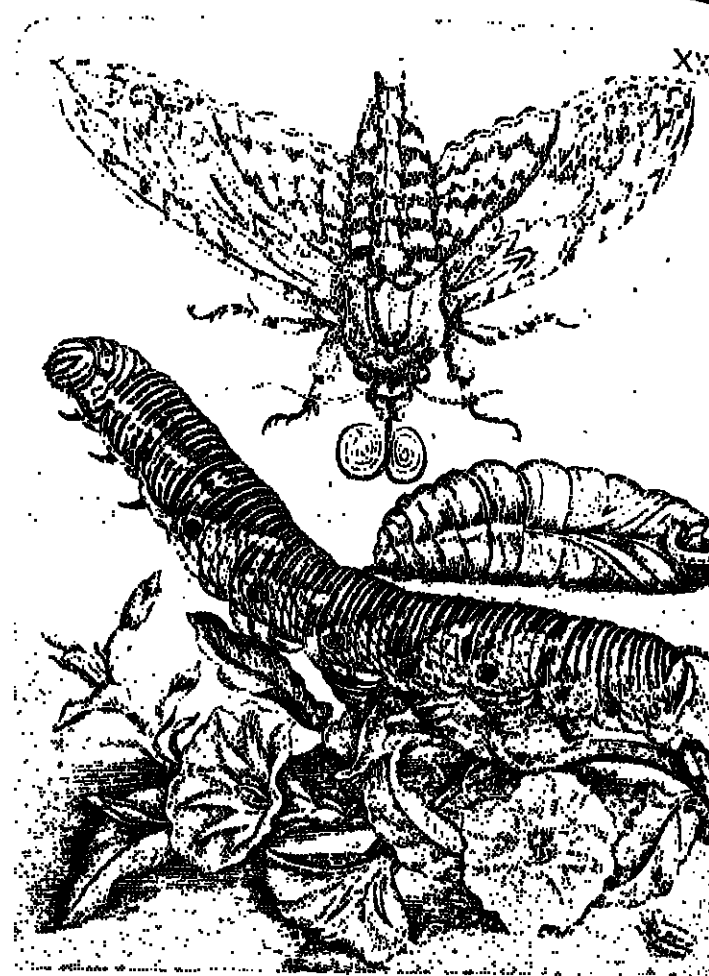
We now know—and it must have been apparent even then—that as a result of past climatic and geographical vicissitudes the fauna and flora of North America are in fact richer in their variety, and in many cases greater in size, than their equivalents in Europe.

John Bartram, the Quaker who established a botanic garden near Philadelphia, travelled widely, and became an authority on all aspects of the natural history of eastern North America, and his son William, a talented artist and something of a poet, and a follower in his father's footsteps, together span the period from 1730 to 1820, and thus provide a connecting thread running through much of the book. It was William Bartram's account of the underground rivers and gushing springs of Florida, in his *Travels through North and South Carolina*, published in a pirated edition in London in 1792, that provided Coleridge with his images of "caverns measureless to man" and the chasm from which "huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail". Wordsworth was equally indebted to Bartram, especially in his poem "Ruth", whose hero, a Cherokee chief, is based directly on an Indian prince whom Bartram met in Florida. So dependent, in fact, was Wordsworth on Bartram's book that when he lost a copy that he had taken with him on a trip to Germany he wrote home asking for another to be sent immediately.

All of the main characters of this book have achieved what Collinson called "a species of immortality". The naming of new genera and species was one of the most important activities of the closet naturalists to whom they sent their specimens, and what better way was there of finding a name for a new animal or plant than to give it the name of the naturalist who discovered it? *Caldenia fusca*, a tiny prostrate herb that covers the dry stony surface of one of the smaller Galapagos islands, now has added significance for me, as has *Boronia longicauda*, the name of the Upland Plover of North America. There are illustrations of these genera, and of *Franklinia*, *Gardenia*, *Kalmia* and others, among the twenty well chosen colour plates and many black-and-white drawings and photographs scattered through the text.

We are familiar with Bates and Wallace exploring the forests of the Amazon and the Malayan archipelago, and with Darwin sailing round the world. The exploits of their forerunners in North America have perhaps seemed less remarkable because the country that they explored is now so well known. Mr Kastner's well researched, pleasantly written and handsomely produced book fully redresses the balance.

William Robinson is best remembered for his *English Flower Garden*, first published in 1833 and many times reprinted (my copy, 1926, is the fourteenth edition). *The Wild Garden* (also delightfully illustrated with wood engravings after the work of Alfred Parsons) dates from 1870, and though reprinted several times is far less well known and harder to come by; it is therefore particularly pleasant to find the enlarged edition of 1894 (the date given on the dust-jacket of the



The convolvulus hawk-moth with field bindweed: one of the fifty plates from the 1718 edition of Maria Sibylla Merian's engravings of European insects and plants reproduced in *The Wondrous Transformation of Caterpillars* (33pp plus plates. Scolar Press. Limited edition, £30). The plates' first appearance in 1679 and 1683 preceded by many years the arrival of Linnaean nomenclature, but their accuracy (and that of Maria's accompanying descriptions) permits ready identification of their subjects. Maria Merian's fame rests largely on her drawings of tropical butterflies done on a two-year visit to Surinam begun in 1684 at the age of 52; folios of plain and coloured plates appeared in 1705.

## Cultivated neglect

By Wilfrid Blunt

WILLIAM ROBINSON:  
*The Wild Garden*  
Introduction by Robin Lane Fox  
338pp. Scolar Press. £7.50.

It has always seemed to me an injustice that neither William Robinson nor his friend Gertrude Jekyll, who between them did so much to change the face of gardening in England, was considered worthy of inclusion in the *DND*. It cannot be claimed that the life of either of them was cut unduly short, for the former died in his ninety-seventh year, the latter in her ninth decade; but both chose the 1930s for their transference to the gardens of Paradise, and the supplementary volume covering that decade dealt particularly harshly with horticulturists.

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reprint, 1897, is an error) now made available with a brief but helpful introduction by Robin Lane Fox.

It was Robinson's advocacy of informal planting, which he called "garden art", that made his garden at Gray's Manor near East Grinstead, that was to open the attack on the follies of excessive "formal bedding", and pioneer the cult of "natural gardening". The first edition overestimated the use of British wild flowers, but by 1891 Robinson had come to realise how many exotics could be planted in natural surroundings with greater effectiveness than some of the humbler natives. Miss Jekyll, who produced her *Wood and Garden* in 1899—nearly thirty years after Robinson had struck his first blow for freedom; yet her influence was hardly less important.

Some gardens—the offspring of Robinson and Jekyll—are born wild. Others calculatedly achieved. But in these difficult times far more have had wildness thrust upon them. This is therefore an appropriate moment to draw attention once again to the charms of what "haughtiest" dismisses as untidiness or neglect.

There is one thing that puzzles me. Robin Lane Fox includes the preface to the 1881 edition of *The Wild Garden*, dated May 20, 1881. I possess this edition, with a preface similarly dated, yet it differs in many respects from the text he gives.

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## A Pembroke paradise

By S. Peter Dance

RONALD LOCKLEY:  
*Orleton*  
The history and natural history of a Welsh manor  
Illustrated by C. F. Tunnicliffe, R.A.  
332pp. André Deutsch. £5.95.

A Rhonda Valley manor once said to Ronald Lockley, "You are an escapist, you are living in a fool's paradise". Whatever the reason for the comment, it is one which Lockley must often have applied to himself, when, trying to restore the neglected manor of Orleton, a once-

delectable place of Pembrokeeshire real estate which he bought for a song several years ago. Having bought it he was left with the daunting prospect of making it habitable and economically viable. With almost no capital and little practical assistance he succeeded, as those who have followed his other pioneering escapades might have expected. But he had a vision which transcended that worthy aim. He had become the owner of a natural paradise, a refuge of wild life where foxes, badgers, bats, buzzards, waterfowl and unusual plants lived in harmony. An assortment of unconventional human characters gravitated to Orleton to help transform the overgrown estate into a tidy nature reserve. Eventually it was taken over as a going concern by the Field Studies Council, who now

## Governing to the end

By Elspeth Huxley

CHARLES DOUGLAS-HOME:  
*Baron Baring: The Last Proconsul*  
344pp. Collins. £7.50.

At the start of his task Charles Douglas-Home was troubled by the well-known fact that wicked people, as we say, are naughty ones, are more interesting to write and read about than good ones. Evelyn Baring was a good man beyond doubt. A son of the great Lord Cromer, he progressed through the Indian Civil Service without a blemish on his character, to mount with dignity and apparent effort up the ladder that then offered to the upper and professional classes so enticing, if not always exciting, a way to the top of the tree. His integrity and devotion to duty were never damaged; his marriage, almost arranged one, to an earl's daughter, repeated into an ideal partnership; he was liked and trusted by Indian and African peasants as much as by his colleagues and superiors; his career was crowned with a peerage and insignia of the Garter. All very well, but where is the tang that gives a dish its flavour? No wonder Mr Douglas-Home was a little dismayed.

Facts of his subject's character came to his aid. Good Baring was, but not pompous nor without a sense of humour. Tall, handsome, well-mannered, particular to his fingertips, no one ever wore imperial plumes to better effect, for his passions were for rock-climbing, for sand-watching, for bird-trapping, for collecting. Blessed with the aristocrat's immunity from bothering about what others thought, he romped gaily with his children through the corridors of Government House, dropped off to sleep in the middle of all official parties, and was once discovered on the seat of a bush latrine lecturing a gathering of fascinated tribesmen on soil fertility—a speech from the throne.

What made this book so well written, however, was that Baring was a man out of his time. There he was, sword and plumes and protocol and all, conscientiously administering bits of an empire that was already falling apart. The effect was like watching a demolition squad busy in the wings dismantling scenery and switching off the footlights. When Baring

went out to govern Southern Rhodesia in 1924—with family, animals, molds, ADCs, and twenty-seven places of luggage—the white man's burden seemed so very firmly in place. Within twenty years it had been dumped.

Baring himself played no significant part in the process of empire-shedding. He was not a political theorist but an active promoter of the imperial task which, as he saw it, was to improve the quality of life of those he governed. As nearly all those persons lived on and by the land, the first priority was to preserve and improve that land, raise its potential, and give the people the means to improve their standard of living. This is now accepted doctrine; in getting it accepted, Baring was a pioneer.

His unhappy period spanned the first four years of the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, into which he was pitched without any warning. He had never even been more than a visitor to the land, and that of his predecessor, Sir Philip Mitchell, and no bureaucrats more complacent than those in the Colonial Office in 1952. Almost everyone in Kenya had seen the trouble coming for years. Warning

after warning had gone to Mitchell's desk, to be brushed aside as alarmist. The only advice the retiring Governor proffered to his successor was how to handle the tricky business of leaving, or not leaving, divorced persons in Government House—a problem "of somewhat unusual complexity as we have the amateur champion hore who has, I think, been divorced by five or six husbands". His wise counsel was to "take no notice for scandal parties, unless an open scandal, but apply the rules for lunches and dinners".

Mitchell left Kenya in June 1952. Baring arrived in September, and in that interregnum the Mau Mau movement, with its gruesome oath-taking ceremonies, its widespread call to arms, and its savage roving gangs bent on murder and destruction, had spread like a bush fire. When Baring reached Kenya, the terrorists were murdering their fellow Africans at the rate of twenty a week. An immediate tour of the worst affected areas left him in no doubt that, in those sections of Kikuyu land, law and order had virtually collapsed. Within three weeks of his swearing-in he had declared a state of emergency which was to last in practice for four years, on

paper for eight. Jomo Kenyatta and half a dozen others were simultaneously arrested.

Neither temperament nor training had fitted Baring for the task ahead. Technically, he was the Commander-in-Chief, and the first priority was to weld together half a dozen bodies often more intent on fighting each other than the terrorists. There was no set plan for grappling with this pervasive, Hydra-headed monster. Murders of Kikuyu by Kikuyu happened daily, while farmers lived in a state of siege, everyone's nerves were strung up, in the background the home government was worrying about what might be said in the House of Commons. Baring had no one to turn to for advice and some of his subordinates, notably the Attorney-General, blocked almost every constructive move. On top of everything, he was a sick man. Amoebic dysentery contracted in India, treated by a drug that nearly killed him, had permanently damaged his liver and condemned him for life to meals of boiled chicken and slices of lemonade. No wonder he failed to act with the decisiveness everyone had hoped for. On too many occasions, he could not make up his mind.

Had Baring's term of office ended then, the judgment could only have been that he was a failure. But three more years of governorship remained and in them his constructive, imaginative mind, his grasp of the agrarian problems that underlay (and still do) the political going-on in Africa, had their chance to come into play. For the first time in history, the concept of practice of individual ownership of land was introduced. "Rehabilitated" Kikuyu returned to their tribal surroundings to find an object to work for and an outlet for ambition. A man with his own plot of land could build for himself and his family a new and, with luck, prosperous future. All this was based upon a plan worked out by the director of agriculture, Roger Swynnerton, and his officers, and, pub-

lished in 1953. Paradoxically, but for the Mau Mau, this plan would almost certainly, like so many others, have remained tied up in its file. Powers taken under emergency regulations could be used to get it started. Baring backed the plan to the hilt and extracted enough money from the British Treasury to get it off to a good start. Soon afterwards, when European settlement was wound up after sixty years, it formed the basis on which land hitherto farmed by Europeans was handed over to Africans.

Kenyatta's remarkable stability and prosperity since his independence in 1963, his generosity and rightly put down mainly to the wisdom of its president; the man who had him arrested and detained in 1952 should share the credit. Kenyatta's statesmanship ensured that stability to date. Baring, the prosperity. The two men did not meet until nearly twenty years after Baring had signed the order for Kenyatta's detention. "If I had been in your shoes I would have done exactly the same," the President told him, amid laughter all round.

Baring was "a very private person," his biographer observes. The small black notebooks in which, throughout his life, he jotted down anything that caught his interest are crammed with a great diversity of facts—dogfish biology, sleep dips, Sudan doves; all facts, and all important. Even letters to his wife draw back no curtains. So Mr Douglas-Home's job has not been easy, but he has done it well. His research has been thorough, the style is informal without being chatty, and his judgments are sound. He has had some thin ice to skate round in the Kenya chapters and, in avoiding falling in, has also avoided some of the pertinent factors. Baring was never in any doubt as to who lunched and, to start with, led the revolt.

It is a stroke of luck that the last of the new extinct species Proconsul should have been such a perfect specimen of his kind. When colonial history comes to be studied with the objectivity only time can provide, this will be a valuable source book. Meanwhile, it is a good read.

## Fairly subsisting

By E. S. Turner

ALEC WAUGH:  
*The Best Wine Last*  
An Autobiography Through the Years 1932 to 1969  
324pp. W. H. Allen. £6.95.

Alec Waugh's first bestseller, *The Loom of Youth*, was written when he was seventeen. His second, *Island in the Sun*, did not materialize until forty years later. In between he wrote continuously "earning a fair subsistence but not in general very highly regarded" (his brother Evelyn's words, quoted in an appendix). In 1962 *The Early Years of Alec Waugh* had "laudatory and extensive" reviews, but on neither side of the Atlantic did sales exceed 3,000 copies. Undaunted, in his eightieth year, he now publishes another volume of autobiography, which takes him to 1969.

Besides those two slices of life, Mr Waugh has written *A Year to Remember* (1931) and he has also worked off many personal experiences in *My Brother Evelyn* and in his novels. Honourably, he vows he will not repeat himself in the present volume, but this can be frustrating for the reader, who keeps coming across passages like "... then followed two fantastic weeks when there happened to me all the things that writers dream of having happen to themselves. I have written a description of it in *My Brother Evelyn*."

For a writer of popular fiction, Mr Waugh was born at the right time, when the American magazines paid handsomely for short stories. These became his main support. On the Riviera he mixed with Somerset Maugham, Michael Arlen, and E. Phillips Oppenheim (the first, we are told, of the tax cutters). In the 1930s he bought a Queen Anne house at Silchester, where his new Australian wife brought up the children, while he turned out his books in hotels and Atlantic liners. After the Second World War, for tax reasons, he became a resident alien in America and obtained a Nevada divorce on grounds of incompatibility. Gradually he developed a love for the West Indies and an attachment for Tangier. When fame overtook him the second time editors sent him about the world on assignments and the firm of Lippincott and Giffey gave him a good time in return for services rendered. The "fair subsistence" he earned was "an essential requisite for the middle-aged man who has not abandoned the claims of gallantry".

The book, Mr Waugh tells us at the outset, will not contain too many edifying examples of family obligations proudly accepted and faithfully fulfilled. By modern standards, he is discreet about his galantries. Should he, perhaps, have

been more discreet about the galantries of a female cousin, for whom he acted as a sort of chaperone? Need he have named the well-known novelist who tipped in to her cabin that night?

In Waugh's America we seem to be far over meeting people, literary and otherwise, whose marriages are on the rocks, or heading for them. To kindle any interest in their affairs and party-going is difficult; the author has been over-indulgent to the ghosts of his diaries.

Though he disclaims having performed much in the way of difficult service to the State, Mr Waugh served in both world wars. He began the second with an outpost post in the British Expeditionary Force as Intelligence Officer, Writer. Later he served in the Petroleum Warfare Department helping to stage those pleasing, but not always successful, demonstrations of how to set the sea on fire. In Baghdad he was assigned at last to real intelligence work. His two years there, he reckons, were worth five novels to him. In all, the war "rejuvenated, refreshed and replenished" him, as it did many others, and his modest rank ensured him the company of younger men.

One would have liked to learn more about day-to-day life in the Macdowall. Or, for that matter, Waugh wrote his more recent books, but that again has been described in *My Brother Evelyn*. How would brother Evelyn have behaved in this sylvan nursery of literature? Badly, one fears.

*The Best Wine Last* is the work of a contented man, containing no more than a ritual swipe or two at the insolence of the *Bat* of England. The author valued brotherhood and conviviality enough to become a Freemason. He liked his brother authors sufficiently to attend conferences of PEN (always a good excuse for travel) and he was even, he says, to feed "poor writers" to middle-aged students in Oklahoma. Too old for cricket, he remains a keen clubman and oenophile. "What is he like as a guest?" Because I am not unknown, I expect a fellow diner guest to know something about me; therefore make no particular effort to make an impression. My books have already introduced me, for better or worse, I relax. How pleasant to be Mr Waugh!

Among his confessed mistakes was to sue Wyndham Lewis for libel. Although Lewis paid up, the strain was not worth it. Another error was to write a novel with the aid of Benzidine; it seemed to be going splendidly, but the drug had put his critical faculties to sleep. Alas, there are pages in this book where his critical faculties have, for some other reason, again deserted him. The prose becomes strangely staccato, advancing in short bursts: one stretch of fifty-seven lines contains fifty-seven sentences. Such a man might forgive him a happy-go-lucky.

This major book — reviewed in last week's T.L.S. — coming from Harvester Press in October

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# To the Editor

## Authors and Unions

Sir.—The argument now raging in your columns, and the columns of lesser journals, about the unionization of writers is beginning, sadly, to resemble a contest between the elephant and the whale: both are unable to engage in meaningful conflict. The two positions are admirably illustrated in the letters from Brian Aldiss and Lady Antonia Fraser in your issue of August 4.

The proponents of unionization say: we are among the Society of Authors with union status to enable it to deal more effectively with all those bodies, mostly themselves, who are not members of the Society. (That may well be true.) But the fact that these fears are imaginary (I will believe in them if anyone will explain exactly how a closed shop for writers is going to work) does not mean that they do not exist. The people who have expressed them are all intelligent and thoughtful people. It seems to me to be the crux of the matter. The very idea of trade unions has become loathsome to many thinking people. No doubt this is the result of excesses by their lunatic fringe and I deplore that it

should be so. Union is strength. Yet the very idea that the weak—should arm themselves with it in their struggle to make a living has evoked a feeling almost of horror. I can only trust that upon calmer reflection others will not be tempted to follow Antonia Fraser's example.

MICHAEL GILBERT.  
5 New Square, Lincoln's Inn,  
London WC2.

Sir.—The ludicrousness of the proposal to turn the Society of Authors into a union can be grasped by anyone who considers a few moments the possible situations that might arise (Letters, August 11). Authors in this country are not bound to a monolithic state publishing house, but to a large and extremely varied number of independent publishers with whom they have individual contracts each of which they or their agents have worked out and bargained about together. If one author is scandalously treated by his publisher and he complains to the Society of Authors, what could happen if it has become a union? Would the society declare a strike and demand that all authors "withdraw their labour", i.e. refuse to go on with the books they are writing, until the publisher in question mended his ways? The vast majority of authors work in their own homes and on their own terms, and have no weekly or monthly salary, so the problems of monitoring let alone picketing such a strike—well, the mind boggles!

Again, if the dispute went on long enough, the authors would probably be in breach of their contracts, and the publishers would obviously have the right to seek legal redress. And if some authors refused to join the strike, and went on writing their books, what sanctions could the society possibly

exercise against them? I can think of none, except perhaps that the rest of the society's members would righteously refuse to publish their books. As in my experience, authors do not buy one another's books, but wait until they are sent review or complimentary copies, I do not think such a sanction would make any dissident author tremble.

I am arguing as a writer of books rather than of scripts or plays, but when the occasional invitation comes for me to write or speak for the media, I have a reliable agent whom I find well able to bargain effectively on my behalf.

JOHN LEHMANN.  
85 Cornwall Gardens, London SW7.

Sir.—To many members of the Society of Authors it will seem the greatest pity that some distinguished writers are resigning, not because of real change in the character of the society, but because of what might happen (Letters, August 11). By resigning they are increasing the possibility—and it is no more—that their fears might be realized; by staying in they could help to prevent it, and keep their resignation, if necessary, for a point of substance in the future. It seems a little premature to start girding one's loins for *sanitization*. (For this year I am chairman of the Executive Committee of the Society of Authors, and this letter is, however, a personal expression of opinion.)

GEORGE UNWIN.  
Harold's Hill, Chert, Farnham, Surrey.

## John Dewey

Sir.—In his review of *John Dewey Reconsidered* (June 2), C. K. Grant writes that Dewey did not interest in logic. Dewey edited and contributed extensively to one book (*Studies in Logical Theory*, 1933) and wrote two others (*Essays in Experimental Logic*, 1916; *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 1938). Chapter twenty of the last of these books deals with mathematical discourse and attempts to account for the abstract character of mathematical propositions—what Dewey calls the absence of "existential reference". In the course of this discussion Dewey explicitly allows for the pur-

suit by mathematicians of internally generated problems: "As mathematics developed, the problems were set by mathematical material as the itself stood at the given time." Yet Grant claims that Dewey's pragmatism does not provide for "inquiry for its own sake", divorced from the solving of [practical] problems that present themselves". Furthermore, in his *Art as Experience*, Dewey points to the presence of aesthetic quality even in such activities as science and business—which for Dewey means precisely that such activities are sometimes pursued for their own sake.

ROBERT PALTER.  
Department of Philosophy, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712.

## F. R. Leavis

Sir.—May I correct two points made by Q. D. Leavis in her letter (August 4)? We did write to Mrs Leavis asking if someone could come to see her in connection with a documentary film we hoped to make about her late husband, but there was, of course, no question of our "demanding" her cooperation. Also, when I wrote to Mrs Leavis I did not say that we would persist regardless of her opposition. I did not state her view that "anyone who is likely to be interested in Dr Leavis's work and is likely to profit by it already knows of it", and explained that we might go ahead with the film in the end, but this would not be because we did not care what she thought, nor would we be acting out of defiance.

There the matter rests for now. If those who admire the work of F. R. Leavis will not talk to us, we cannot make the film in any case. I still can't help feeling that that would be a pity.

WILL WYATT.  
BBC Television Centre, London W12 7RJ.

## 'A Play of Passion'

Sir.—Reviewing my novel *A Play of Passion* (August 11) J. B. Broadbent says it is a "procursor" to *Flesh Wounds* which was published in 1966. This could make it seem that I wrote the novel about adolescence before 1966, but this is not so—the new novel was written recently. Mind you, as I am getting confused myself now, as I am writing at the moment about Paul Grimmer at the age of six in 1929, while trying to get two other novels published about his experiences from 1947 to 1961.

Professor Broadbent, actually, has got one part of the novel wrong. It isn't "Dr Benvis" who befriends Paul Grimmer but an imaginary don called Hally-Whicker. The latter is meant to be a composite of those done in traditional kind who however much one's supervisor scoffed at them, turned out to be superb in a personal crisis.

DAVID HOLBROOK.  
Longacre, Haverhill Road, Stapleford, Cambridge.

## Among this week's contributors

- GUIDO ALMANI is the author (with Bruce Merry) of *Imitation of Life* which has just been published by Cooperativa Scrittori, Milan.
- WILFRED BLUNT's most recent books are *The Ark in the Park*, 1976, and *Splendours of Islam*, 1976.
- ROBERT BLYTH is the author of *Robert Blyth and the Marriage*, 1972.
- CHRISTOPHER BUTLER is a Student of Christ Church, Oxford.
- L. M. COLLIS is a Lecturer in History at Trinity College, Dublin.
- GAVIN EWART's collections of poems include *No foot like an old foot*, 1970, and *Where the Young Penguin Lies Screaming*, 1977.
- ERIC GRIFFITH is a research fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.
- DAVID HIRST is the author of *Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake*, 1974.
- ELSPETH HUXLEY's books include *Livingstone and his African Journals*, 1974, and *Florence Nightingale*, 1975.
- PETER KEATING is the author of *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, 1971.
- G. S. KIRK's books include *The Nature of Greek Myths*, 1974, and *Homer and the Oral Tradition*, 1977.
- DUNCAN MACLEOD is the author of *Slavery, Race and the American Revolution*, 1975.
- ERIC PARTRIDGE's most recent books are *The Gentle Art of Lexicography*, 1963, and *Catch Phrases*, 1977.
- ALAN ROSS is the author of *The West Indies at Lord's*, 1963.
- S. SCHENBAUM's *William Shakespeare* was published last year.
- PETER SCUPHAM's collection of poems *The Hinterland*, was published last year.
- DAVID SNOW is the author of *The Web of Adaptation*, 1976.
- W. B. STAMFORD is Regius Professor of Greek at Trinity College, Dublin.
- OLIVER TAPLIN's *The Stages of Aeschylus* was published earlier this year.
- E. S. TURNER is the author of *Amaz- ing Grace*, 1975.
- JOHN WHITE is a Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Hull.
- DAVID WILSON is Associate Editor of *Sight and Sound*.
- ALAN YOUNG is the editor of *Edgell Rickword, Essays and Opinions*, the second volume of which will be published later this year.

## The Class of Lacan

Sir.—We feel that a reply to Eric Homberger's playful but partially accurate account (July 2) of the year's Essex conference on the sociology of literature is necessary. The conference was not as one-sided as Mr Homberger makes it appear. For example, the final plenary session was dedicated to a discussion of Hegelian/Marxist literary theories in Germany in the 1930s. Claude Lévi-Strauss's contribution to the conference was not as overbearing as Mr Homberger suggests. The French dominance this year had a careful review of the proceedings of the last two conferences ("Literature, Society and the Sociology of Literature" and "1948: the year of the literary review" in your issue of July 2).

Mr Homberger's account of the conference is a mixture of history and politics rather than abstract theory. Homberger's "choice" of the conference as a "choice" is symptomatic of the intellectual stance he affects to criticize. The replacement of concrete historical engagement by theoretical fustian mongering. Perhaps a preview of the next conference—"1942: the Constitution of the Bourgeois Subject"—will reveal the lunatic place within the intellectual life of the British left.

In the first place the title of next year's conference should suggest the extent to which the class of Lacan is not the class of Lukács, and the "day of the literary review" is not the "day of the literary review" but the "day of the literary review". It is imperative that the historical tendencies of the Lacan model of the constitution of the subject be articulated upon a historically specific account of the evolution of the bourgeois consciousness. To demand this, Mr Homberger implicitly does, is to misunderstand totally the rhetorical and political ambitions of the Essex programme, which aim to mediate a historical continuum and its discourses through modern theory and the verse. This is far from either a "fetishization" of the "given" text or a "critical" application of "new" concepts to "old" material. To give an example (in an attempt to popularize it perhaps?) Christopher Hill's account of Milton's wrestling with the status of the biblical text in *De Doctrina Christiana* is evidence of just what extent "fetishization" of the "given" text is endemic in bourgeois thought and political practice. (The vexed issue of "idolatry" for instance, cannot be successfully viewed within the religious domain to the exclusion of a consideration of its significance within the structures of political "representation".) To work theoretically on the discourses of the Civil War is to engage with ideological and political discourses which still constrain thought and practice today.

Perhaps the easiest way to suggest the kind of programme we would like to have next year would be to mention a few of the papers which have already been discussed. The writing of the *Army Count* "Sires" discourse: Army Count and Pulpit. "The theatre and the representation." "The melancholic angler or the anatomy of comedy: leisure and neurosis as poetics of the bourgeois revolution." and "Legal and state definitions of writing." Clearly we do not want to impose orthodoxies, but we do want a simple, direct, and dusty monograph.

Mr Homberger was probably right to sense a crisis this year in the evidence of a "renewance" of "quite traditional" and critical literary scholarship which dominates the teaching of British literature throughout the educational system. But the solution is not to get John Bradshaw back, nor a "new European" thinker. Rather, we need to invite an early offer of papers that the lines we have suggested are a coherent and constructed programme might be presented.

FRANCIS BARKER.  
JAN BERNSTEIN.  
COLIN COOMES.  
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Organizing Committee of the Conference, Department of Literature, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ.

## AUSTRALIA

G. A. WILKES:  
A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms  
332pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms is a sizable book, of very good value; rather more importantly it is also a notable book, scholarly yet very readable. The author does not subscribe to the view that, to be serious, a book needs to be solemn, humourless, and intolerably heavy going.

G. A. Wilkes, born in 1927, became the foundation Professor of Australian Literature, then the Chalmers Professor of English Literature, in Australia's oldest university, that of Sydney, founded in 1850, just three years earlier than that of Melbourne. It is to his advantage that he knows both Britain and the United States rather well. Like all the best of the present generation of Australian scholars, he is a "citizen of the world", a victim neither to chauvinism nor to parochialism.

Nor does he belong to that small, no noticeably influential, group of New Zealanders who have done so much for the study of Australian English and of the English language as a whole in Britain and the Commonwealth. (The problem of why so few New Zealanders have done so much is a puzzle which has never been solved. My own theory is that New Zealanders are so very keenly aware of their geographical, political, cultural, and educational position that, subconsciously, they have resolved to maintain their independence—especially of Australia—on the one hand, and on the other, to become thoroughly acquainted with the language, whether written or spoken, of the United Kingdom; moreover, they feel that they need, to develop a sense of perspective and proportion.)

The title of Professor Wilkes's book embraces and depends on a terminological convenience and an application of "new" concepts to "old" material. To give an example (in an attempt to popularize it perhaps?) Christopher Hill's account of Milton's wrestling with the status of the biblical text in *De Doctrina Christiana* is evidence of just what extent "fetishization" of the "given" text is endemic in bourgeois thought and political practice. (The vexed issue of "idolatry" for instance, cannot be successfully viewed within the religious domain to the exclusion of a consideration of its significance within the structures of political "representation".) To work theoretically on the discourses of the Civil War is to engage with ideological and political discourses which still constrain thought and practice today.

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torical principles". He did not need to be so modest; he merits praise, not a mere polite demurrer.

I was amused to see that Professor Wilkes regards the use of "low" slang as old-fashioned. But, however tolerant we are, "old-fashioned" retains its meaning for all except the lowest and most vulgar members of a permissive society. The lowest common denominator remains the lowest.

I have deliberately refrained from giving the author's introduction its full introduction. It is to be read by every user, every editor. My choice of terms is idiosyncratic, yet not unjust; much less is it arbitrary or careless.

But—"cutting the cackle and coming to the horses"—I have particularly noticed the following. Some are slang, some are colloquialisms, some are catch phrases; they range from the underworld to the Senior Common Room. Professor Wilkes will, I hope, forgive me if, where applicable, I differentiate their status; and excuse me if I have included a preponderance of phrases; something I do, not because the subject vastly and vitally concerns me, but because Australian English and excel in this particular linguistic phenomenon.

All alone like a country dunny implies a metaphorical isolation as well as loneliness, and dunny is literally applied to an outside privy, especially in country districts. The term seems to have got into print a very long time after it was first used in Australian speech. Professor Wilkes cites the phrase for 1952, but the word travelled to Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. Exactly how long the phrase has existed is not known. That is the trouble with words and phrases of lowly origin: "the United Kingdom" or "century or more before my school, any journalist, any inquiring observer thinks to record them."

Dunny shortens *dumarkin* or, better, *dumaken*, often debased to *dun* (legion or -gan, which originally results from the author's and publishers' desire to avoid a clumsy and tediously explicit description of the subject-matter. The full form may be presumed to have, in the sixteenth century, been brought to Britain by the gypsies, who also brought *ken* from the Orient where *ken* and *kun* covered an extraordinary range of meanings, extending from Arvin eastwards. The gypsies, whose language was ultimately derived, via Hindi, from Sanskrit, contributed to the vocabulary of the underworld of London and to the language of most of the countryside they roamed; their contribution has never been adequately determined, the reason being that it demands a wider knowledge than is currently fashionable.

Applies, especially in she's, or she'll be, applies, and in everything's

So much that happens happens in the gaps between the spaces, so much meaning cries aloud from what you didn't say

or else he didn't  
or she thinking away  
thinking the quarry on the hill's blue flank  
had a kind of truck, too.

Take those exchanges: "G'day." "G'day."  
"I been thinking." "Yeah?"  
"Not bad. Been dry, though." "How're the sheep?"  
"Maybe. How's the truck running?"

and so on, at the gravel margin, vibrations hanging in the air like a black angel with a fiery sword or a mortgage spouting blood.

Between the stanzas, under the words, whiteness like chalky bones as orange clouds float over, one by one, rhetorically immortal.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe

# As Australian as a meat pie

By Eric Partridge

apples, in good order, successful, appetising, has flourished since 1940. Wilkes suggests that its origin lies either in *apple order* or in *apple and spice*, rhyming slang for *apple in its nance* "delicious", an Australian variant of the British *apple and rice*. He is probably right; tentatively I propose a different origin: the popularity of the apple in Australia where, not only in Tasmania, the tree is intensively cultivated and the fruit is highly appreciated; nor are all apples green, some being rosy; although not roses all the way.

*Australian as a meat pie* (usually with the expletive preceding *as*), intensely and unmistakably Australian in appearance and attitudes, is of comparatively recent growth. But it must strike inhabitants of cooler countries as an extraordinary phrase choice of metaphor never ceases to amaze the more wary, better informed members of that same society. Once a fantasy has become a habit, a mental fact, there's no point in trying to argue with its hold.

Back o' (of) Bourke should be aligned with the side of the black stump, Hay, Hill, and/or Bogan, and Woop-Woop (here dated 1958, 1954, 1901, 1926 respectively) as the earliest appearances in print, must, all of them, have occurred in conversation much earlier; they are picturesque, vigorous, characteristic, especially in country districts. The term seems to have got into print a very long time after it was first used in Australian speech. Professor Wilkes cites the phrase for 1952, but the word travelled to Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. Exactly how long the phrase has existed is not known. That is the trouble with words and phrases of lowly origin: "the United Kingdom" or "century or more before my school, any journalist, any inquiring observer thinks to record them."

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names, in that it reproduces the constant reduplication and the rhyming or assonantal nature of certain syllables, not due, I think, to any intrinsic poeticism but to the comparative poverty of the vocabulary—a stricture that does not, however, apply to many of the frequent three and, less frequent, four-syllable names. For instance, I once knew well: the town called *Townmouth* and the township of *Cumbarra*.

A congruous pair of catch phrases consists of *back to the cactus* and *Sydney or the bush*, with which compare what do you think this is? First *what's this—bush week?* The desire to get back to one's familiar haunts, usually away from the city. It would be absurd to employ this of a born-and-bred "urban type" holidaying in the country and to apply it to a longing to return to the city or wherever. It is, however, a comparatively few Australian phrases originating in a radio or television series; another is *cop this, young Arry! Sydney or the bush*, with the variant, it will be, *Sydney or the bush*, indicating a desperate attempt to make one's fortune, for instance by betting on a horse, and thus to be able to live in the State capital; failure will entail a return to "the bush", the sparsely settled—or any other—country districts as opposed to city or town; in short, a *back to the bush*, which is, in fact, a *back to the bush*, is in not a *back to the bush*, it has "lived" much longer than *as game as Ned Kelly* and is, I'd say, rather more widely known. Anyway, both men and both expressions are of the certain of a place in Australian folklore, whatever usage's final decision will be concerning their linguistic longevity.

Before discussing more Australian catch phrases, I shall interpolate a few famous Australian single words, all treated satisfactorily, and most of them admirably, by Professor Wilkes. The *(to) battle and hatter* have considerable sociological and anthropological significance and importance. The battle is to struggle hard, with great determination and indefatigable courage, to make a living in daunting conditions, as, for instance, the "cuckies" or small farmers do at all times and notably during the often heart-breaking long droughts. The hatter is one who struggles on, whether in town or country. (I had the honour, as a boy, of meeting A. H. Davis, better known as "Steele Rudd", a friend of my father's, and perhaps the best exponent of what that on a small farm—it happened to be on the Darling Downs—was, not merely *like* a hatter, but a civil servant. On *Our Selection* is probably the best of his rural stories.) As for the *hatter*, the earliest printed source is the prose and verse of Henry Lawson. One of the best novels on the subject of "batters" is Kylie Tennant's *Pooveaux* (1939), yet her *The Batters* has been omitted. Compare *Gludgeoner*, carrier of a *hudgeon*, hence one who preys on society without risk or hard work; whence, by back-formation, to *bludge*, to behave thus. Both noun and verb term for the language of the under-

world.

Much better known in Britain and elsewhere is *cobber*, now slightly obsolescent, after a run beginning in the late 1880s or early 1890s. Whereas Professor Wilkes derives it from English dialectal *dob*: to take a liking to someone, I prefer to prefer it to *chaber* (from Hebrew) *chaber*, a comrade. The British familiarity with the term arose during the First World War, and was perhaps reinforced by Dr. Thomas Wood's warm-hearted, delightful *Cobbers* (1934). Compare the origin of the obsolete Australian *clitrah* or *clitrah*, a girlfriend: through *Yiddish* from German *Kleiner*, little (one).

Almost as well known is *dinkum*, honest, true, genuine, hence good.

Both of these phrases have passed into folklore; both concern criminals—compare the unpleasant character, Jesse James (1847-82), who became an American national hero during his lifetime and a legend ever since, the subject of dime novels, folk tales (as a sort of Robin Hood), a play and a musical. It is to him that Ned Kelly is, more accurately than Buckley, compared. Kelly, hanged in 1880, was not a hatter, as popular report has it, then a daring bank-robbler; but he certainly was courageous.

Baker, in 1941, crisply defined the slang sense of the name as

any person of buccannering, judicious habits, a sense now slightly "old hat". Ned Kelly became an Australian rhyming slang for *any person of buccannering, judicious habits*. (Wilkes). At the author's, "origins obscure". But it is a name known as the wild white man. William Buckley was a convict who, in 1803, escaped from the convict settlement at Port Phillip and lived thirty-two years with the natives. He gave himself up in 1835 and lived until 1856 (Wilkes). Marcus Clarke (1846-81), author of that famous novel about Australian penal settlement, *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874), wrote an article, "Buckley, the Escaped Convict", which was included in his *Early Days*, published posthumously in 1897. The phrase *Buckley's chance* has such variants as *hope and show* and especially *two chances mine and yours*. It has long been shortened to *Buckley's*, as in not a *Buckley's*. Moreover, it has "lived" much longer than *as game as Ned Kelly* and is, I'd say, rather more widely known. Anyway, both men and both expressions are of the certain of a place in Australian folklore, whatever usage's final decision will be concerning their linguistic longevity.

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## Verbal folly

**By Guido Almansi**

**ANDREA ZANZOTTO :**  
**Filò**  
 per il "Casanova" di Fellini con  
 una lettera e cinque disegni di  
 Federico Fellini  
 Venice: Edizioni del Ruzante.  
 L.2.800.

While he was filming *Cusano*, Federico Fellini wrote to his friend, the Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto, asking him for help with two scenes of the film. Zanzotto was to write two poems in an imaginary pseudo-archaic Venetian dialect: a nursery rhyme, somewhere between rignam and rima, and a litany, the seven-foot-tall circus woman as she takes a bath; and a litany to accompany the emergence of the head of a woman from the slimy bed of the Grand Canal. Fellini's letter is itself a literary document of considerable interest in the way it illustrates the relations between cinematic imagination and verbal creativity.

I want to break through the hidebound conventions of the Venetian dialect by rediscovering archaisms or perhaps even inventing new conglutinations of words and meanings. In this way, even the verbal tone in my script can offer some reflection of the glaring visionary folly that I think I have granted onto this movie.... The only original idea I've invented by myself—which takes place at night. Out of the mire of the cruel and colossal black woman's head is to emerge. This figure stands for a tutelary deity. Look! In a way, she is the mysterious female that dwells in all of us. This ritual could be seen as the ideological metaphor of the entire movie. All rituals have a sacred character. The psyche, declined in some strong verbal or representational formulas. As this feminine simulacrum comes into view, it will have an accompanying series of associations; there will be sup-  
plications and alluring euph-  
nies, strongly evocative litu-

# The real Auntie

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**By David Wilson**

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**ROSALIND RUSSELL:**  
*Life is a Banquet*  
260pp. W. H. Allen. £5.95.

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Rosalind Russell was Auntie Mame, a role she was born for. Hollywood's *six years in the posthumous autobiography* is full of wonderful people but they are not always emotionally stable. Miss Russell

# Wanderers of West Africa

coherent and logical system of society. French anthropologists found that the Peul had four clans, linked to the four cardinal points, linked to the four elements, and so on until they came up with a coherent and logical system of thought.

In the neo-colonialist period Africa has been opened up to United States and Chinese markets, and we find Japanese, East Europeans and Americans all on the trail of the elusive Fulani. Paul Riesman, a quiet American financed by a foundation and the Peace Corps, has written a remarkable account of two years spent among a group of semi-sedentary Fulani (they have the cow and milker).

On the one hand the book is a well-researched plain man's guide to the Fulani, incorporating the best of French and British traditions of social anthropology; we have a clear account of village social structure, plus a profound study of the nature-culture divide in Fulani thought.

On the other hand, Riesman has attempted something new. He

## By C. Hooykaas

the spread of these estates and courts but in the early twentieth century there were over a hundred of them. They had their own orchestras, dances and theatre, artisans in wood, stone and metal poets and priests.

The dust-jacket of *The Art and Culture of Bali* features a spectacular wood-carving; there are also sculptures in Bali's rather soft stone, so vulnerable to the erosion caused by windblown sand during the dry monsoon that the sculptures have to be replaced every few decades. Some paintings on wood and cloth in the Klung-kung style are also included. The book is about the celebrated village of Tenganan, which was the chief zone of Dr Ramseyer's research. The life of this village is devoted to traditional art, sport and religion; the inhabitants grant neighbouring villages the privilege of working their land and sharing the crop with the hosts.

Dr Ramseyer describes the role that Western graphic artists such as Rudolf Bannet and Walter Spies

By L. M. Cullen

n systematic collection and research. Dr O'Neill's division of life into self-contained chapters is indicative of an approach more concerned with itemized features than with looking at the general conjuncture with its balance of old and new which testifies to the cultural adaptability of the con-

flexibility, and helps the student to see the comparative significance of the institutions. Tradition was itself only one dimension of a living or dying countryside, and the study of traditional features should be undertaken in close association with the identification of the introduction and diffusion of novelty. Some of the better-off regions had an impressive strength, although weakness depending on perspective, in which it is viewed – to retain traditional elements while also absorbing innovation. Dr O'Neill suggests that the rural Ireland of the 1930s and 1940s is now similar to some of western Europe. In just one sense this is true, but the charm of rural Ireland is that it still retains traditional features, whereas elsewhere on land just as the past has more elements of change than the author seems to allow, the present still remains closer to the past than in western Europe or even Portugal.

**Literature and Folk Culture** is the outcome of a meeting of the Canadian Association for Irish Studies held in Newfoundland in 1976. Only two of the papers are concerned with topics relating to both countries, the rest dealing exclusively with aspects of Irish folk study or literature. The papers suffer by extension taken out of the context of the activities, including drama production, exhibitions, and other extensions, which were part most of the papers are discursive in tone reflecting the intimate and informal milieu in which they were delivered, and with a few exceptions are lacking in

**By David Wilson**

was as solid as Mount Rushmore, tough, determined. Constance was a Catholic who lived her life the way she wanted. She once overheard a powder-room conversation that had the effect that although she was never of Hollywood she was never of Hollywood. She preferred to tend her own garden and was proud of her garden.

another actress, is conse-  
rather dull by the com-  
standards of most of the  
of the stars. She writes  
conventional middle-class  
hood, of her marriage to a  
husband, of the excitement  
ing a child, of her son's de-  
and religious beliefs, of her  
for charity, and of every last  
of the arrangements for  
twenty-fifth wedding anni-  
(the place cards were en-  
silver).

Her editor, she says, had no book-buyers would not have read about her plumber, but "my adventures with King presidents and the owners of pleasure craft." She obliges snap-album memories of escape with the Windsors, the Roys and Aristotle Onassis. But it is that she would have preferred to write about her plumber. She has her awards in the garage, in pride of place in her bedroom a plastic trophy commemorating her son as the best News California.

About her career and on Broadway she had slons. She was proud of her successes in films like *The* and *His Girl Friday* and *Wonderful Town* and *Maine*, but prouder of the made about Sister Kenny, a pioneer. Her comments are wise and unexceptional, anecdotes are homely. In parts she usually played, to have been a thoroughable character, and he reflects it.

**By Gavin Ewart**

trinated with the American Dream or knowledgeable about burlesques of college movies. All the theory (however sound) came later—as they always do. Gene Stutz, Director of the American College matheque in his foreword to this big, beautiful book, writes: "Lloyd was a bit less sublime, a bit less poetic, than the other great silent comedians" and so "a little closer to us." From modest beginnings—selling popcorn in Beatrice, Nebraska—Lloyd graduated to his first acting job in 1907, aged fourteen.

In 1912 he met Hal Roach, a fellow actor in Hollywood. Roach began making exciting shorts in which Lloyd starred as Little Rascals, a variation on Chaplin's "Little Man." The great full-length silence of the 1920s followed—Crawling Up a Boy, Why Worry?, Girl Ship, and Heaven's Sake, The Kid Brother. Speedy (with the others mentioned above)—right up to *Widowmaker*. Danger, the first talkie, in 1929, am afraid (at fourteen) I enjoyed this one too; though the critics have said, probably rightly, that the violent murders on the "Dead End" level

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## The post-plantation South

By Duncan Macleod

ROGER L. RANSOM and RICHARD SUTCH: *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*. 409pp. Cambridge University Press. £15.50 (paperback, £5.95).

While a debate might rage about the nature, extent and distribution of Southern prosperity before the Civil War, few historians have ever doubted that the post-war South was poor, absolutely and by comparison with the North and West, and that blacks were considerably poorer than whites. For some time now historians have been aware that the plantation system—considered as a mode of production rather than as a system of land ownership—collapsed soon after the war; they have been conscious that tenancy replaced both it and other forms of land tenure; and they have known that credit and capital shortages were factors in the South's lack of progress. That these factors were interrelated, and that they were in some sense a consequence of the war and emancipation, has also been clear. But we have had to wait until now for a systematic attempt to explain the nature and direction of those interrelationships. The history of the South will long be indebted to Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch.

The central thesis of *One Kind of Freedom* is clear. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War new economic institutions developed which were so flawed as seriously to hinder Southern economic progress. The disability they imposed in part reflected, and were everywhere reinforced, by racism.

The plantation economy gave way to a system of tenancy. A considerable minority of tenancies involved sharecropping agreements, renegotiated annually. The result was a disregard for such long-term considerations as soil improvement and investment in favour of current income. The crop lien system imposed upon other tenants evils similar to those of sharecropping. Trapped in a network of credit arrangements made with locally monopolistic merchants charging

extortionate interest rates of around 60 per cent, tenants pledged their crops for credit. In both cases there was pressure towards production of cotton at the expense of food crops, since the former was more easily stored and had a more predictable value. The result was a reduction in food crop production below consumption levels, a consequent need to purchase food, an even heavier reliance upon credit, and a stagnating level of total agricultural production. Within this system blacks suffered considerable discrimination. Confined to smaller farms, they needed to work harder to increase yields and generate incomes equivalent to those enjoyed by white tenants. Denied equal access to credit, they must do so, moreover, with inferior implements. But if blacks were the principal victims, the essence of Ransom and Sutch's argument is that the system dragged down the whole South: the partially benevolent nature of King Cotton's despotic rule had given way to an unrelieved tyranny.

The development of tenancy is well drawn and the description of rural merchandising, as it evolved in the 1870s and after, is excellent. It is probably, indeed, the most original and most important part of the whole book. While one might dispute some of the details, the account given of the emergence of new, flawed economic institutions and the role of one major reservation, generally convincing.

The one reservation may, however, prove significant. If there is a major weakness in *One Kind of Freedom* it stems from its overly narrow focus. Explicitly confined to an investigation of conditions in the cotton states, it is actually more limited than that. The focus is almost entirely agricultural and the central argument derives from the problems of tenancy. The arguments adduced to explain low productivity cannot easily be extrapolated to cover all agriculture, and they appear inapplicable to the slow pace of industrial development. The failure to invest in manufacturing, and the low rate of inter-regional labour mobility are given the most cursory and unsatisfactory treatment.

The overwhelming emphasis on blacks also presents problems. Especially in the light of the contention that racism was probably the most significant factor in the

lack of Southern progress, it would seem necessary to devote more attention to the effects of emancipation on whites. The shift toward tenancy on the part of whites is not satisfactorily explained. It is argued that whites preferred to depress land values to selling in an open market which would include blacks. If economic self-interest in this instance gave way to racial prejudice and to a concern for maintaining racial differentials in income and status, why were white owners of marginal lands prepared to surrender the status of independent farmer in favour of the more rewarding, but more demeaning one of tenant, which they shared with blacks?

One gets an overall impression from this book that Ransom and Sutch are straining the evidence in favour of their emphasis upon racism. That emphasis may be correct, but the evidence they present is too often insubstantial and conjectural to make the balance of their interpretation wholly convincing.

*One Kind of Freedom* suffers from one comparatively minor structural weakness within a major structural achievement. The weakness consists of an unevenness of interpretative emphasis. Each chapter stands alone, while sometimes conveying an impression different to that conveyed elsewhere. A single example must suffice. In Chapter 1 the once-and-for-all increase in material income blacks enjoyed as a consequence of emancipation is put at about 30 per cent. There is a hint that that figure could be reduced by almost two thirds if one were to assume that they purchased most of their goods on credit. Yet in Chapter 8 it is clearly suggested that in fact the case, and that the increase in material well-being probably amounted to no more than 12 per cent.

Such problems are minor compared to the very significant achievement of this volume in presenting the findings of chimerical claims in a form intelligible to all readers. The refined data upon which the interpretation rests are incorporated into the narrative as elegantly as one could reasonably expect; their derivations are clearly explained in a series of admirable appendices; and the final appendix discusses the general nature of the data bases and samples utilized in the study.

## The suspect sage of Monticello

By John White

JOHN CHESTER MILLER:

*The Wolf by the Ears*. Thomas Jefferson and Slavery. 341pp. New York: Free Press (West Drayton: Collier Macmillan). £9.75.

The man who drafted the Declaration of Independence was a life-long slaveholder who believed that the "peculiar institution" was unjust and immoral. Thomas Jefferson hated slavery but feared negroes; he favoured emancipation, but only if accompanied by the wholesale repatriation of Afro-Americans. He denied that "black was beautiful" but may have been the father of "mulattoes" who welcomed both the abolitionist and the African slave trade (never in fact the major source for American slaves) and the abolition of slavery into the vast Louisiana Purchase area. In his only book, *Notes on Virginia* (1785), Jefferson made a strong case for innate black inferiority, deplored the effects of slavery on whites, and showed little concern for the enslaved. Compounding such seeming paradoxes and inconsistencies, Jefferson played no active role in the anti-slavery movement. Inspired by the American Revolution, and came to advocate the widespread diffusion of slavery as a major step towards its immediate amelioration and ultimate extinction. Not surprisingly, both pro and anti-slavery spokesmen could, and did, claim Jefferson as their patron saint, and he could have accepted either nomination with equanimity. Aware of his towering reputation and prodigious intellectual and philosophical achievements, historians have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to

explain (or to excuse) Jefferson's physical and metaphysical entanglement with slavery.

In *The Wolf by the Ears*, John Chester Miller adds some interesting details to the currently accepted view—as expounded by Winthrop D. Jordan, David Brion Davis and William Cohen—of Jefferson as, first and foremost, a Virginia aristocrat and practical politician, whose life-style, beliefs and attitudes derived from the ownership of slaves. Judged by his acts, Jefferson did little to stem and much to foster the spread of slavery and the growth of sectional animosity. Judged by his words, he indirectly furthered the cause of emancipation with repeated (and prophetic) warnings of the horrors to come if slavery were not eradicated. But, as Professor Miller also shows, Jefferson's philosophical speculations on race and slavery were abridgely unenlightened. With the abolitionist and the African slave trade (never in fact the major source for American slaves) and the abolition of slavery into the vast Louisiana Purchase area. In his only book, *Notes on Virginia* (1785), Jefferson made a strong case for innate black inferiority, deplored the effects of slavery on whites, and showed little concern for the enslaved. Compounding such seeming paradoxes and inconsistencies, Jefferson played no active role in the anti-slavery movement. Inspired by the American Revolution, and came to advocate the widespread diffusion of slavery as a major step towards its immediate amelioration and ultimate extinction. Not surprisingly, both pro and anti-slavery spokesmen could, and did, claim Jefferson as their patron saint, and he could have accepted either nomination with equanimity. Aware of his towering reputation and prodigious intellectual and philosophical achievements, historians have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to

What of Jefferson's practical involvement with slaves and slavery? He was, by all accounts, a benign master—but not above buying and selling slaves and advertising for runaway slaves. But the most controversial charge brought against him by the professional scandal-monger James Callender in 1802, and one which continues to bedevil historians and biographers, is that the sage of

Monticello was, in a literal sense, the father of some of his "people". Jefferson was alleged, fathered several children by his slave Sally Hemmings—herself probably Jefferson's wife's half-sister. Professor Miller is concerned to refute the charge, and in particular the recent widely-titled and largely fictitious study by Pawn Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*. (The Brodie version describes Jefferson's "involvement" with his unlettered and untrained mistress as one of "romantic love" rather than, as in Callender's account, one of unbridled lust.) Professor Miller rejects both versions as being totally at variance with Jefferson's known character—his refined, almost feminine sensibility—and advances the speculative suggestion that one or other of Jefferson's nephews, Peter or Samuel Carr, may well have been the father of Sally Hemmings's children. Yet circumstantial evidence points to another conclusion: Jefferson was resident at Monticello nine months before each child was born.

In fact, Jefferson's paternity can be neither conclusively proved nor disproved, and Professor Miller, never fully sympathetic to Callender's version of the story, is overly concerned to declare him innocent of a most human "falling" mistake. Ground in his assertion that Jefferson, the apostle of American democracy, "enunciated American principles and ideals quite as though black Americans did not exist." Tragically, the author of the Declaration of Independence was also the author of *Notes on Virginia*, and "by coupling racism with overt professions of belief in the natural and inalienable rights of men, he set the tone for much of subsequent American liberalism." From such a perspective, Sally Hemmings's mulatto offspring falls into insignificance.

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Further details are available from the Personnel Officer, North East London Polytechnic, 109 The Grove, Stratford, E15. Telephone: 01-855 0811, ext. 32, quoting reference No. A853/78. Closing date 1st September, 1978.

**NELP** North East London Polytechnic

### Oldham Metropolitan Borough

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Applications are invited from qualified Librarians for the above post. This Librarian will be based initially in the Children's Services Division of the Libraries and Museums Department. Salary according to Librarian Scale (£2,511-£3,854 plus Phase 1 supplement. Minimum for Chartered Librarians £3,400). Full details and application forms available from the Director, Central Library, Union Street, Oldham. Closing date for applications, 30th August, 1978.

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For further details and an application form write to: The Principal, Dundee College of Education, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD4 1BY. Completed forms should be returned by 4th September, 1978.

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CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Ref. SVP/037/384

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**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**